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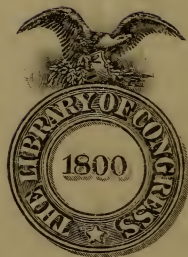
1892



AN
AFTERNOON REHEARSAL

BY LIZZIE MARGARET KNAPP.





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✓
BY LIZZIE MARGARET KNAPP.

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Published by
THE UNITED WORKERS AND WOMAN'S EXCHANGE,
49 Pearl St., Hartford, Conn.

pg 2196
K5A3
1892

AN AFTERNOON REHEARSAL.

A PLAY IN ONE ACT.

CHARACTERS.

MRS. BRYAN, *an elderly lady, devoted to young people.*

ANGELIQUE, *her maid, whose English is somewhat Frenchy.*

PHYLLIS HERNDON, *always in a scrape.*

LAURA DREXEL and KITTY VANDESSEN, *society girls with a taste for private theatricals.*

AUNT NANCY BUTTERNUT, *from Scatterbrook.*

COSTUMES.

MRS. BRYAN. Gray hair, lace cap, gray or black dress, fichu.

ANGELIQUE. High-heeled slippers, short dress, white apron, coquettish cap with ribbons.

PHYLLIS. Street suit, large hat—later, a trained white dress with ruff and powdered hair, veil thrown over head as she enters second time, concealing features.

LAURA. Street dress—later, a pretty, old-fashioned gown, broad Leghorn hat, large fan.

KITTY. Street dress—later, a velvet cape off one shoulder and a Cavalier hat.

AUNT NANCY. Old-fashioned dress and shawl, large, queer bonnet, much trimmed, spectacles, reticule, carpet bag, cotton umbrella, mitts, and a paper bundle.

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AN AFTERNOON REHEARSAL.

SCENE.—A modern parlor, fancifully furnished. Door at R. Door at L. or C. back, behind a screen. Afternoon tea table with cups and saucers at L., near front. Angelique dusting with a long handled feather-duster, sings a French song, or hums to herself.

ANGELIQUE. There! the room is nearly done—a touch to the tablecover, so! and a *soupcou* of dust from the chair, so! All is complete, fresh, in order, like Madame herself. Ah, but Madame is an angel of goodness, but an angel! Never shall I forget when first I entered this house—it seemed to me a paradise. And Madame, a lady, precisely as it should be, and speaking so gently, “Angelique, will you have the kindness to do this or that?” *Ciel!* but how my other mistress used to speak! (through her nose) “Angelique! Angelique! *you* go wipe off the mantel-piece, *you* bring me the broom, and be quick about it, do you hear?” Ha! Ha! I can see her now. But those terrible days are over.

[Enter Mrs. Bryan, C.]

MRS. BRYAN. Angelique?

A. (turns quickly.) Is it that Madame speaks?

MRS. B. You may bring down the costumes I laid out on the bed upstairs, and put them on the sofa.

A. Yes, Madame. (Courtesys.)

MRS. B. And there is a box of hats on the floor; bring those down, too.

A. Yes, Madame. (Goes off R.)

MRS. B. It is nearly time for the dear girls to be here. They seem to enjoy coming to my house so much. I am sure I don't know why, unless it is because I enjoy having them. Young people always

do me good. I love their pretty ways, and when I see them dancing around this parlor I feel like a girl again, myself.

[Enter Phyllis, hurriedly, R.]

PHYLLIS. O Mrs. Bryan!

MRS. B. My dear Phyllis! Why, what is it?

PHYLLIS (hiding her face on Mrs. B.'s shoulder.) I'm in another scrape! (sobs.)

MRS. B. What is the matter?

PHYLLIS. Everything is the matter! Aunt Jane wants me to marry Mr. Pemberton Griggs! (sobs again.) That's what's the matter!

MRS. B. My dear, he is too old for you!

PHYLLIS. Old? He's a venerable patriarch! He has one foot in the grave. He's forty-five, at least!

MRS. B. (suppressing a smile.) You do not seem to like him very well, Phyllis.

PHYLLIS (drying her eyes—with sarcasm.) Oh, *my* feelings haven't been consulted. Aunt Jane likes him. She says (mimics) that there are exceptional advantages to the match. It is my duty to remember her superior wisdom, and not allow my inexperience and romantic ideas to make me obstinate and blind to my highest good. Oh, yes, I love him dearly—I adore him! (with biting sarcasm.)

MRS. B. Do not get so excited, child. Does Mr.—ah, Mr. Griggs seem to care for you?

PHYLLIS. Like a grandfather! A well tempered affection, you know, that will stand the wear of time—at least, that is what he said last evening, when we were out driving. (more cheerfully) I'll show you. (Faces front of stage.) My dear Miss Phyllis! (coughs, heaugh! heaugh!) You must have seen (pulls down imaginary waist-coat) the admiration with which I have for a long time regarded you. I cannot assert that I feel for you that impassioned attachment which, believe me, (smooths imaginary beard) exists nowhere outside of fiction, but I will do my best to make you happy. Your aunt has given me permission to speak. May I not hear from your own lips whether I may have encouragement to hope? (Turns to face Mrs. B.)

There he is to the life! Is that the kind of man I want to marry? Is that the way I want to be made love to? Oh, no! *no!* not much!

MRS. B. Do you know, Phyllis, I think you must prefer someone else?

PHYLLIS (confused.) I don't see what that has to do with it.

MRS. B. Sometimes it has everything to do with it—but I confess I am puzzled to understand why Mr. Griggs has taken such a sudden fancy to you.

PHYLLIS. Am I such a fright?

MRS. B. Not at all—you are very pretty, as you know quite well.

PHYLLIS. I will tell you why. He knows that Aunt Jane is rich, and he knows that Aunt Jane approves of him. I told her this morning that she had better marry him herself, since she seemed to like him so much.

MRS. B. Why, Phyllis, my child! What did your aunt say?

PHYLLIS. She looked her very sternest at me, and said I was a shameless girl—but I'm *not*, (sobs) only I won't marry Mr. Pemberton Griggs—I *detest* him!

MRS. B. Well, cheer up, my dear, and we will see what is to be done. The case is not hopeless yet.

PHYLLIS. Oh, you are always so good to me!

MRS. B. You had better go and bathe your eyes before the other girls come. There is a bottle of rose water on the bureau.

PHYLLIS. I will. (Goes C. and comes back.) Are they very red?

MRS. B. What?

PHYLLIS. My eyes?

MRS. B. Not very—but I think you had better use the rose water. (Phyllis goes again C.) Poor girl! with her bright, impulsive ways, to be so entirely in the power of a cold, calculating aunt. I am heartily sorry for her—though I could not help laughing, she was so funny. (Laughs.) I will go and help her. (Goes off C.)

[Enter Angelique R. with a pile of costumes, which she arranges upon the sofa.]

A. I have heard it all. *La pauvre petite!* I hope it was no sin. Mademoiselle knows I would rather die than betray her. Have not

I too, had my sorrows? Francois loved me, but alas! we were parted. I have wept tears of anguish. Now I begin to hope once more. If only Francois remains true! but yes, he must be true! Can he have forgotten? How can I doubt him? (Looks in mirror, arranges cap.) Yes, I look the same. I have not grown old in the least. Ah, there is the bell! (Goes off R. re-enters with Laura and Kitty.)

A. Madame will be in in a few moments, if you will give yourself the pain of awaiting her. Shall I take your wraps, Mesdemoiselles?

LAURA. Can you carry all those, Angelique?

A. Perfectly, Mademoiselle.

KITTY. Thank you, Angelique.

[Angelique goes off R.]

KITTY (pulls off gloves.) Is my dress all right in the back?

LAURA (shakes it into place.) Yes—how does my hair look?

KITTY (pushing in a hairpin for her.) Lovely! (They come down front. Kitty finishing a story already begun.) So, when I looked up and saw him standing right there in the doorway, I was *paralyzed*, my dear. At first, I thought I'd pretend not to see him, but just then I had a bright idea, and I made a step toward him, and beckoned to him with my fan. "Mr. De Grassey," I said very reproachfully, "where *were* you the fourth dance?" (Stops, looks at Laura and laughs.)

LAURA. That was splendid! Of course he could not say anything after that.

KITTY. Of course not.

[Laura moves to sit down opposite Kitty.]

KITTY. Oh, come here and sit. This chair will hold two. (Laura sits on arm of Kitty's chair.) You are forgetting your boarding-school training, Miss Drexel.

LAURA. We used to have to sit on the bed in those times.

KITTY. Four or five in a row, yes. Oh, *do* you remember the night we made molasses candy over the gas, when Molly tried to show us a new way of dancing the racket, on the bed, with her

shoes off, and how the bed broke down, and we all went down head first into the ruins?

LAURA. And don't you remember how Mrs. Sylvester came running upstairs? Somebody had plastered the door-knob over with mucilage, to keep out those little Juniors, and she came tearing in, waving one sticky hand in the air—

KITTY. And confronted four pairs of shoes rising out of the middle of the bed—"Young ladies, what is the meaning of all this disturbance? Get up, instantly."

LAURA. Yes, and we *couldn't* you know, so she had to drag us out by our feet, herself—oh, dear! how shocked she looked! (Both laugh again.) [Enter Mrs. Bryan, C.]

MRS. B. Good afternoon, girls. I am so glad to see you.

L. and K. Good afternoon, Mrs. Bryan. *So* kind in you to let us come!

LAURA. Mamma sends her love to you, Mrs. Bryan.

KITTY. Clara wants me to thank you for the lovely flowers you sent her.

MRS. B. Give my love to them both. And now about the theatricals. I have been looking in my store-room, and have brought down these old dresses to see if you can use any of them. (All three go up to sofa and examine dresses.)

KITTY. Oh, what a pretty gown—so quaint and old-timey! It would be just the thing for Laura in her part.

MRS. B. What is your part to be, Laura?

LAURA. A modern girl, but I have to appear in an old-fashioned gown at a fancy ball in the play. I will do it for you. Will you do my lover for me, Kitty?

KITTY. You know I never *could* act. I came to see *you*, but I'll read the part, if that will do.

LAURA. Then put on this hat and cape, to look like a knight of the olden time. May we dress up in your room, Mrs. Bryan?

Mrs. B. Certainly.

LAURA. Come on, Kitty. [They go toward C, dresses over arm, bandbox in hand.]

[Phyllis steps from behind screen, veiled. Kitty exclaims.]

PHYLLIS. Stand, ye who would enter my dominions! Who are ye and whence do ye come? (Stretches out one hand under veil. Girls look at each other and Mrs. B. Phyllis in ghostly voice.) I am the White Lady of the Turret Chamber. Touch me not. (Wails Oo—ooo! Girls start back. Phyllis suddenly throws back veil, and laughs.)

GIRLS. *Phyllis!* Why, how you frightened us! Where did you get that pretty gown?

KITTY. You look too sweet for anything.

LAURA. But what makes your eyes so red?

KITTY. Are you in another scrape?

PHYLLIS. I'm doomed to matrimony, that's all. (Giggles, courtesys.) Mrs. Pemberton Griggs.

LAURA. Phyllis! Why, he's an old bachelor.

KITTY. And there's a bald spot on top of his head.

LAURA. And something is wrong with one of his eyes.

KITTY. And he wears a blue Prince Albert coat,

LAURA. And has dyspepsia—O Phyllis, you can't marry *him!*

PHYLLIS. I am very much afraid Aunt Jane's going to make me—do go along and dress, girls! (They go off C. Kitty looks around, saying "Mr. Pemberton Griggs! Oh, it's *too* funny!")

MRS. B. You are feeling a little brighter, Phyllis.

PHYLLIS. It always does me good to come here. I should think you would be worn out, having so many of us giddy girls around, Mrs. Bryan.

MRS. B. My dear, I love young people. I should like a houseful all the time. It is years since my own little children died, but I miss them still.

PHYLLIS (softly.) Poor Mrs. Bryan.

MRS. B. They died of scarlet fever—both in one week. (Looks away a moment.) We old people learn to speak of these things quite calmly—quite calmly, Phyllis—but I hope your life will be spared such a heavy sorrow.

PHYLLIS. I wish I could do something for you, dear Mrs. Bryan.

MRS. B. My dear, you do me a great deal of good by being just what you are—a bright, affectionate girl. (Kisses Phyllis.)

[Enter Kitty, airily.]

KITTY. My noble dames, I salute you! Behold my magnificence! Don't you think this cape is becoming?

MRS. B. Very. Is Laura ready yet?

KITTY. I left her prinking in front of your looking glass. You'll never know her when she appears, she looks so perfectly lovely.

PHYLLIS. How truly complimentary!

KITTY. Well, you know what I mean. In the words of the immortal Shakespeare,

“At sight of her, my heart 's on fire,
And chokes the words I fain would utter!”

(Strikes an attitude.)

PHYLLIS. You are the girl who “never *could* act!” Why, I can very easily imagine you doing some heroic part in days of yore.

MRS. B. Ah, the good old days of yore!

[Phyllis and Kitty to the front. Laura enters in time to join in last verse.]

SONG.

Tune—“Annie Laurie.”

PHYLLIS. In quaint attire, and stately,
Which some fair maid once wore,
We hail, in smiling fancy,
Those good old days of yore.

ALL THREE. Those good old days of yore—
The days that come no more—
We hail, in smiling fancy,
Those happy days of yore.

KITTY. Those maidens patriotic
A country's freedom knew,
And memory salutes them—
So noble, brave, and true.

ALL THREE. So noble, brave, and true,
As their descendents know—
We hold in sweet remembrance
The girls of long ago.

MRS. BRYAN. True courage lives unfailing,
Brave hands their work uphold,
And hearts beat on united,
As in those days of old.

ALL FOUR. As in those days of old,
'Tis love that finds a way;
We greet in loyal friendship,
The maidens of to-day!

LAURA (with a courtesy.) Ah, my gallant knight!—come, let us begin. We are losing time.

[Mrs. Bryan and Phyllis watch from the back.]

KITTY (looks up from book.) I like that. Who kept us waiting all this time, Miss Vanity?

LAURA. Never mind that—begin at page 24.

KITTY (reads hesitatingly.) Miss Jasmine—is that the right place?—Miss Jasmine, if I am not mistaken, this dance is mine.

LAURA. You are eager for it, it seems, since you claim it when it is so nearly over.

KITTY. Was it my fault that I failed to find you?

LAURA. Not your fault, perhaps, but—

KITTY. My misfortune—yes, I know it. Let me fan you—eyes like yours should be more forgiving, Miss Jasmine!

LAURA. Mr. Randolph! (Turns away.)

KITTY. Do not—(looks up) do not—oh, I've lost my place—here it is—do not wither me like that, Miss Jasmine, (changes tone) you know you have me at your mercy.

LAURA. I know nothing of the kind.

KITTY. You must have seen how I regarded you—

PHYLLIS. "With a well tempered affection, that will stand the wear of time"—

MRS. B. Hush!

KITTY. I love you to distraction! [Anyone would to see her in that gown.]

LAURA. Well, is that my fault?

KITTY. Not your fault, perhaps, but—

LAURA (decidedly.) My misfortune.

KITTY. Do you really mean it, Violet? (Laura nods.) Won't you look up? Then I must say good-bye, and (pretends to sob) I hope I shall never see you again—boo hoo—oh, boo hoo!

LAURA. You ridiculous girl! You are just ruining the play.

KITTY. I will be good, but that was so funny. Who would be a lover? (Returns to book.) I am going now, Violet. I cannot bear it any longer. Good-bye!

LAURA. You are in a surprising hurry, are you not?

KITTY. Why, I thought you would be glad to get rid of me.

LAURA. I am sorry I provoked you—(holds out one hand) cannot we be friends?

KITTY (seizes it, still looking on the book.) No, never! I've told you I love you, and I'll stick to it! Don't you care for me a little, Violet?

LAURA. I don't know.

KITTY. Think.

LAURA. Perhaps I could, if I tried.

KITTY. Will you try?

LAURA. Not to-night, I have so much to think of.

KITTY. I see—you are playing with me. I thought at least you had some heart.

LAURA. I have! Oh, don't go away—don't leave me!

KITTY (coming back.) You do love me, then?

LAURA. Well, on compulsion, I admit that I do.

KITTY. You are an angel!

LAURA. Oh no, I'm not—I'm not half good enough for you.

KITTY. Yes, you are—and will you let me speak to your father?

LAURA. When?

KITTY. To-morrow.

LAURA. To-morrow? Why don't you say yesterday?

KITTY. Oh, you little witch! (Throws the book down, rushes at her, turns to others.) Really, it would soon wear me out to make love like that!

PHYLLIS. You do it ever so well, Laura—only, you want to be a little more shy when you ask him why he is in such a surprising hurry—don't you think so, Mrs. Bryan?

MRS. B. Yes, I think it might improve it. It is very amusing.

A. (from the doorway.) *C'est magnifique!*

LAURA. Now, Phyllis, it is your turn. She has the hardest part of all in that medieval play, Mrs. Bryan.

PHYLLIS. Shall I do the soliloquy?

MRS. B. Yes, do.

PHYLLIS. Then, don't either of you *dare* to say Mr. Pemberton Griggs to me when I call myself an unyielding bride—remember.

L. and K. Oh, no, we'll never mention him!

PHYLLIS. Kitty, you will have to call "Hildegarde," and catch me when I faint—I'll tell you when.

KITTY. I will.

[Phyllis takes the stage. Clasps her hands before her.]

PHYLLIS. Alone! at last, alone! a brief half hour before I am led to the altar, a despairing, but unyielding bride. I am forsaken by all; deserted by all my maidens; no sympathizing woman near to whom I may confide my sorrows. They would have me believe that Max is false, but I will deny it with my latest breath. To doubt him were to die. But oh, Max, Max, does not some instinct tell you of my danger, and bid you fly to my rescue? Soon it will be too late. There is one way of escape, only one! (Looks at paper cutter in her hand.) Good-bye dear room where once I played as a child. Had I foreseen my fate in those happy days!—Good-bye dear portraits of my father and mother! It is the last time I shall ever look upon your faces, for I will die by my own hand at the altar, ere I will wed the false hearted Count. Hark! is that a footstep on the stairs? [Trembles.]

KITTY (rushes forward.) Hildegarde!

PHYLLIS. Oh no, *that* is not the place to come in—you have spoiled it all!

KITTY. I am so sorry—do it over again, and I'll be sure to come in right this time.

PHYLLIS. Now, don't come in until I tell you. (Goes on.) It is my uncle and the Count. My time on earth is very short—(shivers) But no! they shall not find me trembling with craven fear. I'll meet them proudly to the very last. (Straightens herself, and folds her arms.) Come on! why *don't* you come on? [To Kitty.]

KITTY. Hildegarde!

PHYLLIS. Max! It is Max! [Faints.]

[Enters Aunt Nancy.]

AUNT NANCY (standing in doorway.) Well, well, what's this, what's this?

MRS. B. Why, Aunt Nancy!

AUNT N. Yes, it's Aunt Nancy for certain, but what's the matter with the girl over there?

LAURA. She's just fainted, that's all—O Phyllis, you did do it *beautifully*!

AUNT N. Is that the way to speak, you heartless girl, when any-one's a sufferin'? (Sets down bundle.) Dear, dear—well I've got some hartshorn right here in my reticule, for I thought I might be took sick on the cars—no, 't isn't here, but I must have it in my bag. (Kneels on floor, to open bag.)

MRS. B. Never mind it, Aunt Nancy—it is only theatricals. These young ladies are neighbors of mine.

AUNT N. *Theatricals*! and you, Car'line, was brought up so strict, and your father wouldn't so much as let you play checkers, or twelve men morris! Well, well.

[Girls all crowd around her.]

LAURA. Too bad you didn't come a little earlier.

KITTY. You would have enjoyed it too.

PHYLLIS. Let me take your wraps.

LAURA. It was perfectly harmless fun, Aunt Nancy.

AUNT N. (relaxing.) Well, you are pretty girls, anyway. (To

Laura.) Seem's if I knew that dress you've got on. Why yes, Car'line, don't you remember? It was Emmeline Wilson's, she that was Emmeline Pettigrew. I remember a story about that dress.

GIRLS. Oh, do tell it to us!

AUNT N. Well, I don't know. I can't stay long, for I am on my way to the depot. I've been in from Scatterbrook all day, shopping.

MRS. B. Angelique?

A. (entering.) Yes, Madame.

MRS. B. Bring in the tea.

AUNT N. Don't you trouble to make tea for me right in the middle of the aft'noon, Car'line.

MRS. B. Oh no, it is all made.

AUNT N. Pretty early, aren't you? Well, I may as well take my things off. How do you like my new bonnet?

LAURA. It is very becoming.

PHYLLIS. It just suits the shape of your head.

KITTY. It's very dressy.

AUNT N. So 'tis, so 'tis. I wanted a dressy bonnet, for I hadn't had one since before Amarylly Green was married, and that was all of seven years ago. I told the milliner 'bout how I wanted it trimmed. She was a drefle obligin' girl, and she said she'd fix it up reasonable. I no needed to paid for it, either, without I was a mind to, for when the bill come in, it had "received payment" on it.

MRS. B. (smiling.) That does not mean anything, Aunt Nancy, unless the signature is on it.

AUNT N. Don't tell me, child. They never could have collected it. They can't take me in, if I do come from the country.

[Angelique brings in tea.]

A. (going out.) How she is droll, that woman!

[Mrs. B. pours tea. Girls sit around Aunt Nancy, teacups in hand.]

LAURA. Now the story, Aunt Nancy.

AUNT N. Sure enough! Now I call this re'ely comfortable. Car'line, that's a good cup o' tea. Well, when I was a little girl, Emmeline was a grown up young lady, just twenty, and as pretty as a picture. Her ma gave her that dress on her birthday. We dressed

more tasty in those days than they do now—girls was handsomer looking, too.

PHYLLIS. And you were the handsomest one of them all, weren't you, Aunt Nancy?

AUNT N. (pleased.) Go away, child. I looked as well as the rest, I suppose. Well, Emmeline had a sweetheart she thought the world of, and he set a sight by Emmeline, too. One cold night, along about Thanksgiving, there was a ball, and Emmeline, she went in that dress. Jim, he couldn't go, for he had some very particular work to do that night in the school-house—he kept a school, Jim did, over to Crocketts corner. In the middle of the ball Emmeline overheard two men talkin' against Jim, and sayin' that they might as well pay him back that night as any other time, when everybody was out of the way at the ball. You see, they had an old grudge against Jim, I forget why, and the school-house was in a lonely kind of a place, full a mile away. Emmeline listened till she knew just what they were up to, then she slipped out of the door, an' run a mile over the snow to warn Jim. When she got him home safe, she fainted dead away—that's the kind of girl they used to be those days.

LAURA. And do you think any of us would do less if there was need of it? You don't *know* the girls of to-day, Aunt Nancy! They are just as self-denying, just as heroic!

AUNT N. Well, well, mebbe you are. Some girls is different from others. There's a girl to home, lives near me, 's one of the other kind. She's engaged to a Mr. Pemberton Griggs—have you ever heard of him? He lives up here—they're a good match!

KITTY. Why, he wants to marry Phyllis!

PHYLLIS. Why, he asked me to marry him, only last night!

AUNT N. Don't you have nothing to do with him, child—he's a deceitful creature, and vain as a peacock.

PHYLLIS. Most assuredly I shall not. The idea of his presuming to make love to me—

MRS. B. Like a *grandfather*, Phyllis!

PHYLLIS. Any way at ail—and engaged to another girl all the time. It is cowardly! It is despicable! It's the meanest thing I ever heard of!

LAURA. You won't have to die by your own hand at the altar, will you, Phyllis? [Girls laugh.]

MRS. B. I will call on your aunt, Phyllis, and tell her about this.

PHYLLIS. I hope you will—she'll believe *you*.

AUNT N. Well, I don't seem to have come here for *nothing*. You're as pretty girls as ever I see—come down to Scatterbrook some time, all of you, and see me. [Rises.]

GIRLS. So we will.

MRS. B. Stay to dinner, Aunt Nancy.

AUNT N. You don't have dinner at this time o' day, Car'line?

MRS. B. Yes.

AUNT N. I thought you looked kind o' peaked. You'll have dyspepsia, Car'line, sure.

GIRLS. Do stay, Aunt Nancy.

AUNT N. Well, I will. I guess I can make out to eat something. It's a mercy I come along just when I did, for I have helped—

L. and K. She has helped—

MRS. B. and PHYLLIS. You have helped—

KITTY. —to get Phyllis out of another scrape!

[Curtain falls.]

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